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# HOSPITAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

ALICE SHEPARD GILMAN, R.N., DEPARTMENT EDITOR

## THE PLACE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN A SCHOOL OF NURSING

BY MARION HOWE BOWERS, R.N.

*Madison Sanitarium School of Nursing, Madison, Wisconsin*

**T**RUE education is three-fold, including the development of the mental, physical, and spiritual. It has been clearly demonstrated that mental alertness and spiritual discernment, as well as physical development, are greatly increased when the students are assigned even a relatively small portion of time, devoted to physical exercises and the cultivation of health habits.

Health habits embrace a much broader field than that of eating and drinking. Every one who takes up the nursing profession should be versed in the science of the care of the body.

Sanitarium trained nurses should be representatives of every feature of the health message. Others not perhaps engaged so directly in work for the physical betterment of humanity, look to these workers for leadership in matters pertaining to dress and diet, as well as correct and regular health habits. Many in the field bemoan the fact that graduates of the training schools are not promoters of the health principles for which our institutions were founded. The complaint that nurses are graduated with undermined health is not altogether ungrounded.

What are we teaching our nurses in training that will give their bodies the best development? Does our instruction include the fundamentals concern-

ing proper sitting, standing, and walking? Louisa Lippitt, head of the Corrective Department of the University of Wisconsin, using the illustration that our bodies have shelves, says that the way we sit, stand, and walk determines whether the organs apportioned to these various apartments shall remain in position ready for the most efficient service, or whether by faulty posture they shall be pushed into an indescribable heap where they cannot be expected to do their best. Each portion of the body is built for a definite purpose, and if the harmony is interrupted some part must carry an added burden. We should hardly enjoy keeping house with all the furniture crowded to one side of the room, and yet incorrect standing and sitting postures force this condition upon our bodies, and we take it for granted that nature is able to do as good work as under normal conditions.

How can we develop nurses so that they will know that proper dress, healthful dietetic and other habits, and the training and developing of the physical organism is of inestimable value, so that they will be proper representatives, physically, mentally, and morally, to get the message of health across to the people? The practice of hygiene, in order to be of any value or to have any

force in the life of a worker, must have been adopted as a result of conviction and not from compulsion. So in our classes it is necessary to set forth such an ideal as will stimulate the pupils voluntarily to adopt for themselves a high standard of healthful living.

It is possible so to develop the course in physical education as to assist very materially in attaining definite results. Primarily the object of physical training is health. Posse says,

The exercises are to encourage nature in her normal activity and also to prevent and overcome tendencies to abnormal development; in fact, to counteract the evil tendencies of our modern civilization.

The exercises are given to strengthen certain muscles which we have not been using. Much of the time we use only certain muscles and allow others to deteriorate. An unused muscle atrophies, and an underdeveloped body is easy prey for infection.

Physical training affords every opportunity to maintain a properly regulated body which produces better physical health. One authority says:

Whatever promotes physical health promotes the development of a strong mind and a well balanced character.

Having had anatomy and physiology, and the reflex areas in the principles of hydrotherapy, a nurse has every advantage in these classes. This knowledge forms a sound basis on which to build the theory of physical education.

Perhaps the next question would be, Who shall take this course in physical education? This subject should be placed on a par with the other subjects in the curriculum; every student should be required to take it. I question whether one who is physically unable

to carry this work would be able to finish a three-year training course without other serious drawbacks. The students before entering the class should have a general examination, and the instructor should be informed of any abnormal condition in the spine, lungs, heart or feet. On these facts the class work should be based. There should be a final examination, and a grade given for the subject. The support and interest of the teaching staff and the superintendent will do much to foster the progress and enthusiasm of the students.

A favorable hour should be chosen. It is a mistake to hold these classes in the early morning hours, for though the interest might be high in the beginning it would soon lag and the enthusiasm die out. Evening classes are convenient because there is no recitation period confronting the student and the whole spirit can be thrown into the activities, finishing off with a spray and a good night's rest. Afternoon classes are favorable because often the class can be held outside in the open air and sunshine. Knowing that there is life in the air and sunshine, the activities would by all means be given the preference of the great out-of-doors. To minimize the evils of indoor work, the gymnasium should be above ground and admit a copious circulation of air and plenty of sunshine.

If any real benefit is to be derived the class should be held regularly, at least once a week, and twice a week is preferable. In order to make appreciable gain, the period should cover one hour. The classes are best held from October to March. The marching and good times on Saturday night, which are

common in our sanitaria, can hardly be called physical training; they may be termed recreation.

By physical education is meant, not the stunts and feats that usurp time and energy with the possible result of life-long injury, or the athletic sports which breed the competitive spirit or use an excess of time, but a course that results in "symmetrical development, invigoration of mind and body and conformity to the laws of nature."

The clothing should permit perfect freedom of movement to every part of the body. Little benefit is derived from taking physical exercise encased in a nurse's uniform, which restricts the movements. Sometimes there is a temptation to plead for steel supports, but of what use is it to try to exercise one's arm if it is bandaged in a splint? Usually a thorough understanding in the first class period settles any further question regarding this. Just as important is the question of shoes. It is a serious mistake to permit the wearing of the ordinary every-day shoes which prevent the free movement of the many muscles of the ankles and feet. A neat and inexpensive outfit is composed of an all-white middy which can readily be washed, a black tie, black bloomers, (about \$2), black stockings, and white tennis shoes. The uniformity of apparel increases the dignity of the pupils, encourages coöperation and enthusiasm, and fosters a desirable class spirit.

The gymnasium class hour should be educational and recreational. Every class period should include free exercises, marching tactics, and games. Theoretical work can also be woven in. The lessons should be graded and progressive to fit the special class taught.

The instructor should be thoroughly trained so that the work would not be given by anyone who knows only a few "stunts."

As for text books, this is a little difficult, since the exercises are given in an unfamiliar nomenclature. However, there are books written for school teachers without the use of codes which one could adopt. For example, *Physical Training* by Lydia Clark, published by the Sanborn Company, and "*Calisthenics*" by Jean Henry, Pacific Press. A syllabus of physical training may be obtained from the educational boards of different states, such as New York and Pennsylvania. The book by Jesse Bancroft on games is a splendid production, which includes all classes of games, such as indoor, outdoor, quiet, thinking, guessing games and relays. No amount of theory in this line can suffice actual training and experience under a competent instructor. All of these phases are necessary for success in the teaching of physical education.

By theory is not meant a heavy programme which will demand time outside of the class period, since the curriculum is already crowded. However, when the exercises are given, some of the physiological effects may be explained, for it is important to know when certain exercises should not be given. The amount of theory that can be given depends on the interest manifested by the class.

Under "Free Exercises" comes the "Day's Order," which is a systematic and progressive outline giving exercises for all parts of the body, that there may be symmetrical development and equalization of the circulation. In this group are given the exercises that benefit

posture in sitting, standing, and walking; that correct stooped shoulders; that strengthen and correct the arches of the feet and that develop the tone of the abdominal muscles, and assist nature to overcome untoward tendencies. There are many other exercises included in this group, but space does not permit their mention. Last in this list, but not least, come the breathing exercises. The value of knowing how to breathe deeply and properly cannot be overestimated.

In this connection may be taught the principles of dress, extending from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, and all the health habits. If the importance of these principles is emphasized, there can be developed unconsciously a feeling of responsibility to conform to the laws of nature. The principles will thus be followed with the greatest degree of love and reverence for God who has made us in His image and who finds pleasure in beauty and perfection.

The marching tactics give coördination, self discipline and self mastery. The games develop a sense of fair play, the power of self restraint, and the ability to work with others, increase efficiency, and foster a spirit of coöperation.

For any human being to enjoy life recreation is essential. All too true is the old saying that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." What fatigue compares with that of a tired nurse?

There is bodily weariness and combined with it a nervous pressure which must be released. This onrushing energy wants to get out, and will get out.

Activities that can take care of this outburst of energies constitute a veritable safety valve. Such activities are

in reality recreation. Proper recreation not only acts as a safety valve, and re-creates, but produces better physical development. It may also have definite and constructive results. Some of the benefits may be summed up in the words, coöperation, initiative, efficiency, originality, self-reliance, decision and adaptability. "The give and take spirit is an educational asset" and the fact that one has learned to work with others as well as for others is not to be overlooked. Desirable habits are fostered, such as perseverance, quick thinking and self-respect. "Fair play is learned, which makes it easier to live a clean, courageous, generous life." Not only is there physical gain, such as vitality, energy, and resistance against disease, but also symmetrical development of the body. Mentally there is a re-creation during the play hour and desirable traits are woven into the character.

Space does not permit of giving the inestimable value to the patient as well as to the nurse, of a course which includes not only the general classes but also the classes in the special corrective exercises. Seventy-five per cent of the college and university girls are required to take corrective gymnastics under supervision, because of the physical findings in their entrance examinations. Dare we say that nurses have less need of knowledge in the first principles of caring for and the training of their bodies? Too often they are allowed to just grow up in training, like Topsy.

Of all the subjects in the curriculum, physical education, properly taught, is of paramount importance in producing nurses who are positive health factors to all people with whom they may come in contact.